



Seattle's Comprehensive Plan Update

PRELIMINARY SCOPE OF WORK: TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan supports the City's growth management strategy by providing policy direction regarding development, operation, and financing of the city's transportation system. The Goals and Policies encourage actions that provide for the movement of people, goods, and services within Seattle and throughout the region. Consistent with the ideal of sustainable growth, this element promotes use of the city's existing street capacity by providing alternatives to single occupancy vehicles. Promoting alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles means ensuring adequate transit services, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and support of land use patterns (the Urban Village strategy) that encourage pedestrian activity. This element satisfies legal mandates of the State of Washington's Growth Management Act by providing criteria to measure the adequacy of the transportation system. It also identifies how the transportation system will continue to meet service standards as growth occurs, and provides for a six-year finance plan for transportation projects.

Key Issues in 2004 Update

The updated Transportation Element, like the rest of the Comprehensive Plan, will retain its focus on the Urban Village strategy. The update includes revision of all technical appendices to reflect current conditions and anticipated conditions to the year 2024, as well as some organizational changes to improve clarity of the plan. Major changes to the Transportation Element fall into two categories — implementation and establishing transit goals. These are discussed below:

1. Comprehensive Plan/Transportation Strategic Plan Alignment — Implementation of the policies in the Transportation Element will benefit through the concurrent update of both the Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP).

The Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) is an implementation document that sets out strategies and actions to achieve Comprehensive Plan goals and other transportation needs of the city. Adopted in 1998, the TSP prioritizes the City's actions into near-term, mid-term, and long-term actions to be taken by SDOT and other relevant City departments. While the relationship between the TSP and the Comprehensive Plan is a matter of City policy, the organization and relationship of TSP actions and strategies to specific Comprehensive Plan goals and policies is less specific. Both documents are based on the idea that transportation improvements should be based on making the existing system function better rather than expanding street capacity. In the process of clarifying the relationship of Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element policies and TSP strategies, the following changes will be made:

- ♦ Street Classification: Currently, the Comprehensive Plan establishes a Transit Priority Network, a system of Principal Arterials, and major truck streets. These Comprehensive Plan designations are part of a larger street classification system set out in the Seattle Comprehensive Transportation Element. Consideration is being given to consolidation of the street classification hierarchy and establishing the Comprehensive Plan as the source of classification policy with actual designation being part of the TSP.
- ♦ Street Typologies: The transportation system can reinforce the Urban Village strategy by providing the type of services and design that allow for mobility within and between urban villages. The means providing the type of transit services, car pool options, and pedestrian facilities that encourages the type and density of development envisioned. Transportation Element policies direct transit investments to link urban villages and encourage pedestrian activity. Additional policies providing for street design typologies may be considered for such areas as well.

2. Goals for Travel Choices. The City was not able to meet citywide mode split goals for year 2000. Should the Comprehensive Plan's 2010 goals be modified to reflect what the City has achieved so far? Should the Comprehensive Plan establish mode split goals for individual Urban Centers?

"Mode split" refers to the choices between available transportation modes made by users of the transportation system to and from a specific location. The travel modes considered in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan include single-occupant vehicles, car pools, public transportation, use of bicycles or walking, and working at home. Through the Urban Village strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies encourage development of land use patterns and transportation systems that reduce use of single-occupant vehicles. The Comprehensive Plan establishes benchmark goals to measure how well this strategy has worked. In updating the Comprehensive Plan, consideration will be given to identifying the most appropriate mode split goals. Specifically:

- ♦ Are the current mode split goals too ambitious? Should the Transportation Element establish citywide mode split goals based on past performance (1990-2000)?
- ♦ Should mode split goals be developed for urban centers or retain a citywide focus. While reduction of single-occupancy vehicles on citywide basis is important, the effectiveness of the Urban Village strategy may be better measured with mode split goals for Urban Centers. Establishment of Urban Center mode split goals will also satisfy King County Countywide Planning Policies that require local jurisdictions to establish mode split goals for employment centers.

The Department of Planning and Development (formerly DCLU) will be publishing a white paper on options regarding mode split goals in fall 2003.